



July 2023



Now that summer is really here, why not take a break from the daily routine with a walk in the beautiful surroundings of Chislehurst Commons, a piece of rural England in our urban setting.



We have already enjoyed some wonderful community events on the Commons in this Coronation year, and there is another one to look forward to on Saturday September 23rd.

Booking is now open for this fantastic Art Event with all proceeds going to Chislehurst Commons.

Full details of the event and how to apply for tickets can be found at the end of this newsletter.

In our monthly newsletters we aim to show you some of the work that goes into managing and maintaining the 180 acres, and some of the amazing wildlife that makes its home here.



This month we focus on the grasslands.

We know that England has seen a huge loss of biodiversity over recent years, and it is important to do all we can to try to reverse this. Living creatures need places to feed, breed and hide with safe pathways between them, and grassland provides an ideal habitat for many invertebrates and small mammals.



The management of the grasslands in such a busy area, crisscrossed with roads, is complex.

It is important to maintain sightlines for traffic, and, where necessary, verges are mown regularly, especially at road junctions.

Other areas are mown to enable community access. The photo above shows Toby, our Assistant Keeper, mowing the grass in the Cockpit in preparation for The Big Picnic.



However, we also have a responsibility to preserve our acid grassland, a Priority Habitat in the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan. It is an increasingly rare habitat that supports its own ecosystem and relies on nutrient-poor soil.

Acid grassland is best maintained by grazing animals, and in the past local people grazed their few sheep, cows, and horses on the Commons. We manage most of these areas now by mowing once a year and raking off the cut grass. This ensures that nothing remains to rot down and add nutrients to the soil.

All the grassland around the Centre Common area – excluding the site of the

Crowning of the May Queen and the Rotary Summer Fair – is managed in this way.

The poorer the soil, the more the wildflowers flourish, and these sites support a variety of plants – for example, knapweed, wild carrot, yarrow, yellow rattle, cat's ear, sheep's sorrel – which are typical of acid grasslands.



Yellow rattle



Yarrow



The Overflow Glade is a good example of a mix of acid grassland and heathland, and is also mown once a year in September. On a warm, still day, it is full of butterflies, grasshoppers and other invertebrates.



The two areas either side of Watts Lane, near the Cockpit, are home to colonies of yellow meadow ants, a feature of some acid grasslands, and plants such as heath bedstraw and mouse-ear hawkweed. These areas are never mown.

The photo shows the Morley Road side of Watts Lane.



Our surveys show that most of our acid grassland areas respond well to this regimen.

However, in the area above the Ramblers Rest, coarser, more dominant, grasses were taking over and smothering lower-growing flowering plants, making the area less biodiverse.

Last year we began an experiment to try to re-establish the acid grassland, by depriving the soil of nutrients. The grass was cut in March, June and September and all the cuttings were raked off and removed. Each time the grass took more nutrients from the soil to re-grow, but it did not have time to grow long enough to crowd out other plants, which were then able to mature and shed their seed. Generally, coarser grasses need richer soil. Progress has been monitored closely.

This year, due to staffing issues, we were not able to mow the grass in March, but it will be cut and raked in July and September.

Initial observations are encouraging.



Our mowing regimen aims to maintain and enhance the grassland habitat, but cutting grass at any time will disrupt the life cycle of invertebrates - butterflies, grasshoppers, ladybirds, dragonflies and beetles, for example - and damage the nests and runs of small mammals.

So, an area is left uncut to ensure that the wildlife still has a refuge. Next year's butterflies, for example, may already be there as eggs or caterpillars.

The photo above shows the working party raking grass recently on the verge outside the Methodist Church in Prince Imperial Road, where a central strip has been left as a refuge.

We will monitor these refuges and hope to see plenty of butterflies and other invertebrates.

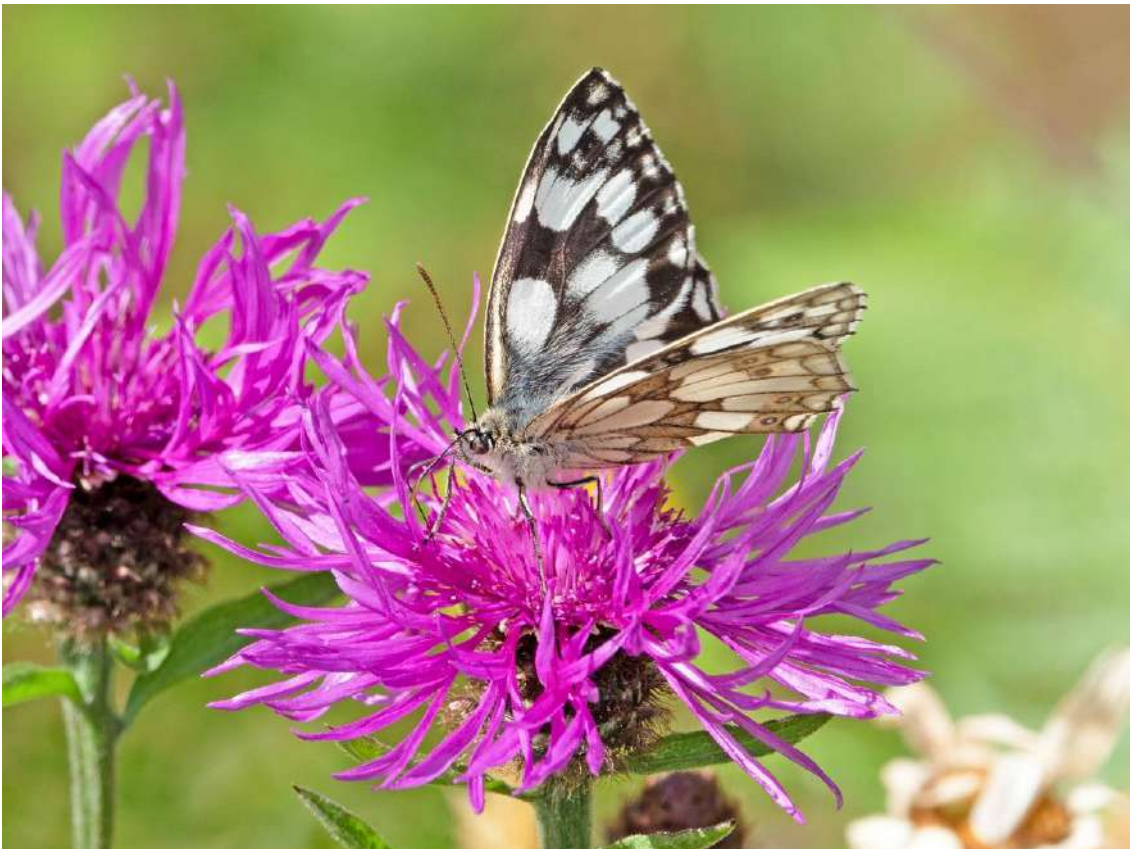
The photos below were all taken on the grasslands of the Commons.



Small copper



Common blue



Marbled white



Meadow brown

Our wonderful team of volunteers work hard to make our Commons biodiverse and beautiful.



The 180 acres of common land in Chislehurst are well used by the community, free and open to all at all times, within the bye-laws.

They are also home to an amazing variety of wildlife.

We are very fortunate that the Commons are protected under an Act of Parliament.

However, the Act made no provision for funding, and we rely on the generosity of local people.

We have two full-time Keepers, whose knowledge and dedication are invaluable. Everyone else who works to preserve and maintain the area does so voluntarily.

If you would like to support our work,

you can donate via our website

www.chislehurstcommons.uk

or via PayPal Giving

Thank you!

Turtle Tally



We were very pleased recently to welcome Suzie, the lead researcher on Turtle Tally, a Citizen Science Project investigating released pet terrapins in the UK. The Project aims to assess their impact on the environment, and any welfare or health issues.

Suzie was able to tell us some fascinating facts about the terrapins that live in our ponds, and to address many of our questions.

The research is ongoing, but it is important to note that releasing non-native species in the UK is illegal.

Their website www.turtletally.co.uk is well worth a visit.

Life at Rush Pond



For the first time in many years, there is a family of tufted ducks on Rush Pond. Although as many as 8 pairs have been recorded at the monthly bird counts, in the past few years they have disappeared over the summer months, and we have not seen any ducklings.



This is a female mandarin duck, not as striking in colour as the male, but the markings are very attractive. There are currently two females at Rush Pond.

And Finally - a Spectacular Find!



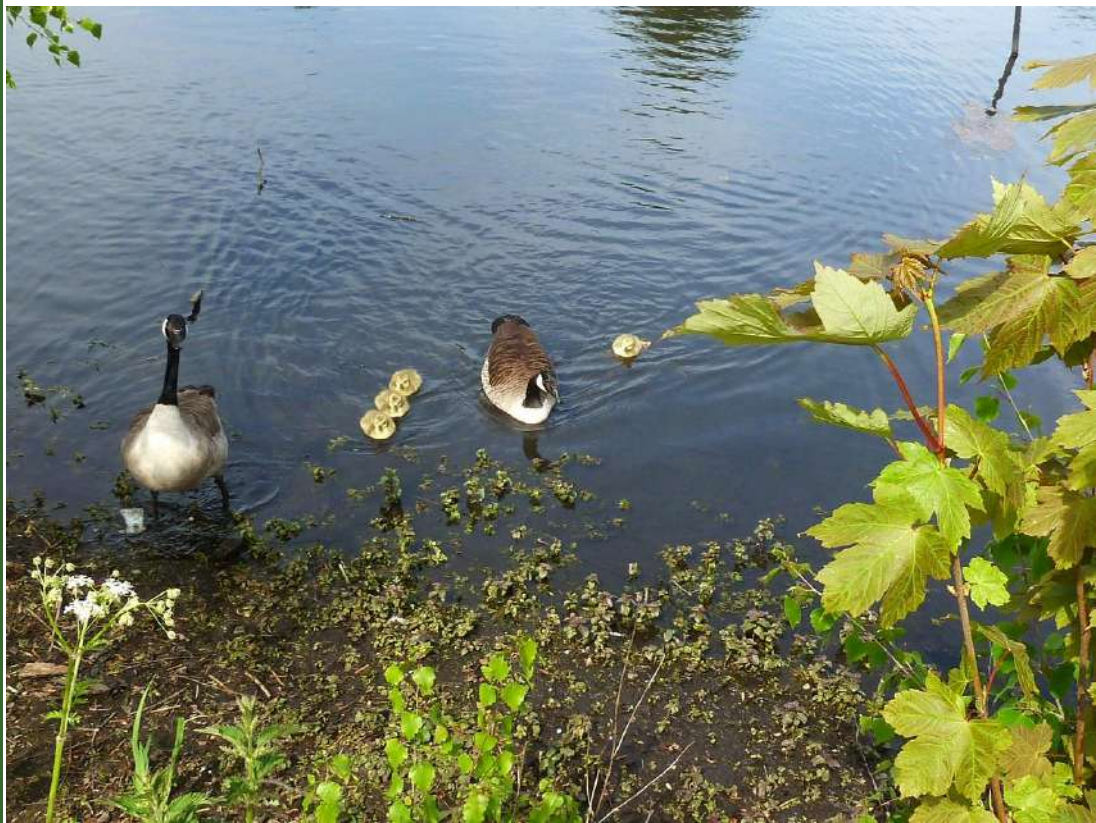
While checking Commons' reptile survey sites, we had a surprise encounter with this impressive adult female stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*. Having spent at least five years as a larva inside a rotting tree stump, then as a pupa in a cocoon in the soil, this recently emerged adult has only a few weeks' life remaining above ground. Hopefully, in this time she will encounter one of the larger males (with its antler-like mandibles) flying round the area searching for a mate. If all goes well, predators and other misfortunes avoided, she will lay eggs on or near a decaying tree to start another cycle of unseen wood recyclers.

To help conservation efforts and to monitor numbers, please send reports of any stag beetles' sightings to the People's Trust for Endangered Species, and if seen on the Commons, please also let us know for our records.

Get your bird seed at Champion Wines!

We are grateful to Champion Wines for stocking packets of seed on our behalf. This food is healthier for the birds than bread or products made from flour.

All proceeds go to Chislehurst Commons.



Our beautiful Commons not only provide us with a green space for rest and relaxation, but also give us an opportunity to observe the natural world and its annual cycle at first hand.

We will continue to do our best to maintain and enhance it for present and future generations.

CHISLEHURST Creates

... the Magic
of Nature



Saturday
23rd Sept
1-5pm

Creative Fun on the Commons
(Watts Lane/School Rd)

Arts, Crafts & Family Fun
for children of all ages

Activities • Entertainment • Tea Tent • Face Painting
Photography/Art competitions and much more!

For ticket information see **Chislehurst Creates**
on social media or scan the code:

www.chislehurstcommons.uk

Instagram: [chislehurst_creates](#) Facebook: [Chislehurst Creates](#) Twitter: [@ChisCreates](#)

Ticket info:



[ticketsource.co.uk/
chiscommons](http://ticketsource.co.uk/chiscommons)

All proceeds go towards the upkeep
of our beautiful commons



With huge thanks to our fabulous local sponsors



(More sponsors to be confirmed,
watch this space!)

Printing services kindly subsidised by Darenth Print & Design Ltd

**Saturday 23rd September, 1-5pm on Chislehurst Common (Watts
Lane/School Road)**

Chislehurst Creates is an outdoor art festival organised by local volunteers to inspire children and families to get creative on the Common.

This year's theme is '*The Magic of Nature*'. An exciting array of hands-on art activities have been 'conjured up' to spark the imagination and educate young minds about our natural surroundings.

Expect interactive art-making, face painting, refreshments, music and entertainment; an afternoon of creative fun for all the family. You may even find a real magician amongst the crowd. Seek him out and prepare to be amazed.

All profits will go to Chislehurst Commons, the registered charity responsible for the upkeep of the 180 acres of green spaces in the area.

Come along to enjoy the spectacle, soak up the community spirit and help raise much needed funds.

As a community event, ticket prices have been kept as low as possible to cover the activities and art supplies (plus a personalised tote bag to take home those magic-inspired crafts and creations).

Refreshments will be available in the tea tent at an additional cost.

Tickets are available online for a small booking fee, or in person from JDM on Chislehurst High St or The Chislehurst Society (The Old Chapel, between 9-12 on Wednesdays only).

- This event will go ahead whatever the weather. Tickets are non-refundable.
- A ticket is required for each participant intending to make art. Supervising adults and babes in arms go free. A lanyard will be provided for each ticket-holder to identify them as a participant.
- Buy tickets in advance to take advantage of the reduced price: £5 per participant before 26 Aug, £7 from 27 Aug - 22 Sep, £10 on the door.
- Children should be supervised at all times. Volunteers cannot be responsible for their welfare.
- Making art can get messy so please dress accordingly. Organisers cannot be responsible for any damage to clothing.
- Parking is limited so ticket holders are encouraged to arrive on foot where possible.
- Toilet facilities will be available in The Crown Inn on School Road.

For any queries, email creates@chislehurstcommons.uk

Chislehurst Creates is made possible by the generosity of our sponsors:

**The Cockpit
The Chislehurst Society**

**JDM Estate Agents
Balloonista
New Mortgage Solutions
Studio 212
The Mills Care Group**



Chislehurst Creates - the Magic of Nature!

Booking is now open!

Click on the link or scan the QR code

www.ticketsource.co.uk/chiscommons

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Over 7,000 retailers and services will donate to us when you connect to their websites via **easyfundraising** to shop with them – at no extra cost to you, and you earn all your normal loyalty benefits!

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It's easy to use and these donations really mount up, so please sign up to support us by clicking [here](#)

Simplified instructions on how to use [easyfundraising](#) can be found by clicking [here](#)



You can also support us by using the easyfundraising app available below

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[Click here to access a map of the Commons](#)

Thanks for this month's photos to – Peter Edwards, Kevin Jennings, Michael Knights and Mary Wheeler.

Thanks also to the Editorial Team – Kevin Jennings, Christine Wearn, Ross Wearn and Mary Wheeler.



Chislehurst Commons are proud to display the Green Flag Award logo.

[If you would care to donate, please click here](#)

[or donate online here](#)

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